

2. (AMENDED) A method of preparing and transporting food for rethermalization comprising the steps of:

at a first location:

preparing food;

apportioning the prepared food onto at least one tray;

loading the at least one tray, bearing the apportioned food, onto a rack for receiving and supporting a plurality of trays in a predetermined alignment;

providing a transfer vehicle for transporting the rack, loaded with the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, from the first location to a second location spaced from the first location;

loading the rack, stacked with the at least one tray, onto a transfer vehicle for transportation to a second location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, in the transfer vehicle to the second location;

at the second location:

transferring the rack from the transfer vehicle to a receptacle at the second location; and

rethermalizing the apportioned food while the at least one tray is supported by the rack at the second location.

9. (AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim 2, further comprising the step of using a mobile trolley incorporating heating/cooling means as the receptacle to facilitate rethermalization of the apportioned food on the at least one tray.

10. (AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim 2, further comprising the step of using one of:

a mobile trolley incorporating heating/cooling means as the receptacle;

the mobile trolley coupled in operable combination with a separate heating cooling means; and

the heating/cooling means to facilitate rethermalization of the apportioned food on the at least one tray.

13. (AMENDED) A method of preparing, transporting and dispensing food, the method comprising the steps of:

at a first location:

preparing the food for consumption;

apportioning the food onto a plurality of trays at the first location;  
providing a maneuverable rack with a predetermined stacking arrangement of particular dimensions and stacking the plurality of trays, once apportioned with food, in the rack;

loading the rack, stacked with the plurality of trays, onto a transport vehicle for transportation to a second remote location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, in the transport vehicle to the remote location;

at the second remote location:

transferring the rack, at the second location, from the transport vehicle to a receptacle, and the receptacle having at least one of heating means and cooling means, and the receptacle being configured to receive at least one rack;

activating one of the heating means and the cooling means to rethermalize the apportioned food of the plurality of trays of the rack; and

dispensing the plurality of trays, containing the apportioned food, to consumers for consumption once the apportioned food is sufficiently rethermalized.

21. (AMENDED) A method of preparing, transporting and dispensing food, the method comprising the steps of:

at a first location:

preparing the food for consumption;

apportioning the food onto a plurality of trays at the first location;

providing a maneuverable rack with a predetermined stacking arrangement of particular dimensions and stacking the plurality of trays, once apportioned with food, in the rack;

loading the rack, stacked with the plurality of trays, onto a refrigerated transport vehicle for transportation to a second remote location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, in the transport vehicle to the remote location;

at the second remote location:

transferring the rack, at the second location, from the refrigerated transport vehicle to a moveable receptacle, and the moveable receptacle having at least one of heating means and cooling means, and the receptacle being configured to receive at least one rack;

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- relocating the moveable receptacle to a desired position;
- activating one of the heating means and the cooling means to regenerate the apportioned food of the plurality of trays of the rack; and
- dispensing the plurality of trays, containing the apportioned food, to consumers for consumption once the apportioned food is sufficiently regenerated;
- collecting the plurality of trays with the rack in the receptacle following consumption by the consumer;
- removing the at least one maneuverable rack from the moveable receptacle;
- loading the at least one maneuverable rack back onto the transfer vehicle for transportation of the rack from the second location back to the first location for reuse while leaving the receptacle at the second location.

22. (AMENDED) A method of preparing, transporting and dispensing food between a series of remote locations, the method comprising the steps of:

at a first location:

- preparing the food for consumption at a first location;
- apportioning the food onto a plurality of trays at the first location;
- stacking the trays in a manually maneuverable rack, and providing the rack with a predetermined stacking arrangement of particular dimensions;
- loading the maneuverable rack onto a transfer vehicle for transportation to a second remote location;
- transporting the rack, containing the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, in the transport vehicle to the remote location;

at the second remote location:

- transferring the maneuverable rack, at the second location, into a moveable receptacle comprising at least one of heating and cooling means, and the receptacle being configured to receive at least one of the plurality of racks;
- relocating the moveable receptacle to a desired position;
- activating at least one of the heating and cooling means prior to dispensing of the food trays to consumers;
- dispensing the food trays to the consumers for consumption;
- collecting and re-stacking the trays in the rack situated within the receptacle;

removing the at least one maneuverable rack from the moveable receptacle; and

loading the at least one maneuverable rack back onto the transfer vehicle for transportation of the rack from the second location back to the first location.

23. (AMENDED) A method of preparing and transporting food for rethermalization comprising the steps of:

apportioning food onto at least one tray;

at a first location:

loading at least one tray bearing the apportioned food onto a rack for receiving and supporting the at least one tray;

loading the rack, containing the at least one tray, onto a transport vehicle for transportation to a remote location from the first location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, in the transport vehicle to the remote location;

at the remote location:

after the rack has been transported to the remote location in the transport vehicle, transferring the rack from the transport vehicle to a receptacle, the receptacle being configured to receive at least one rack; and

activating a heating system and a cooling system to regenerate the apportioned food on the at least one tray on the rack that is positioned in the receptacle.

32. (AMENDED) A method of preparing and transporting food for rethermalization comprising the steps of:

apportioning food onto at least one tray;

at a first location:

loading at least one tray bearing the apportioned food onto a rack for receiving and supporting the at least one tray;

loading the rack, containing the at least one tray, onto a transport vehicle for transportation to a remote location from the first location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, in the transport vehicle to the remote location;

at the remote location:

after the rack has been transported to the remote location in the transport vehicle, transferring the rack from the transport vehicle to a receptacle, the receptacle being configured to receive at least one rack;

providing a heating system and a cooling system to regenerate the apportioned food on the at least one tray on the rack in the receptacle; and

activating at least one of the heating system and the cooling system to regenerate the apportioned food on the at least one tray on the rack that is positioned in the receptacle.

41. (AMENDED) A method of preparing, transporting and dispensing food, the method comprising the steps of:

preparing the food for consumption at a first location;

apportioning the food onto a plurality of trays at the first location;

providing a maneuverable rack, lacking any heating and cooling means, with a predetermined stacking arrangement of particular dimensions, and stacking the plurality of trays, once apportioned with food, in the rack;

loading the rack, stacked with the plurality of trays, onto a refrigerated transport vehicle for transportation to a second remote location;

transferring the rack, at the second location, from the refrigerated transport vehicle to a moveable receptacle, and the moveable receptacle having a heating means and a cooling means, and the receptacle being configured to receive at least one rack;

relocating the moveable receptacle to a desired position;

activating the heating means and the cooling means to rethermalize the apportioned food of the plurality of trays of the rack; and  
dispensing the plurality of trays, containing the apportioned food, to consumers for consumption once the apportioned food is sufficiently rethermalized.

42. (AMENDED) A method of preparing, transporting and dispensing food between a series of remote locations, the method comprising the steps of:

at a first location:

preparing the food for consumption;

apportioning the food onto a plurality of trays at the first location;

stacking the trays in a manually maneuverable rack providing only a predetermined stacking arrangement of particular dimensions and lacking any heating and cooling means;

loading the maneuverable rack onto a transfer vehicle for transportation to a second remote location;

at the second remote location:

transferring the maneuverable rack into a moveable receptacle having a heating means and a cooling means, and the receptacle being configured to receive at least one rack;

relocating the moveable receptacle to a desired position; activating the heating means and the cooling means prior to dispensing of the food trays to consumers; and

dispensing the food trays to the consumers for consumption.

43. (AMENDED) A method of preparing and transporting food for rethermalization comprising the steps of:

at a first location:

apportioning food onto at least one tray;

loading at least one tray bearing the apportioned food onto a rack for receiving and supporting the at least one tray, the rack having no heating system and no cooling system;

loading the rack, containing the at least one tray, onto a transport vehicle for transportation to a remote location from the first location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, in the transport vehicle to the remote location;

at the remote location:

after the rack has been transported to the remote location in the transport vehicle, transferring the rack from the transport vehicle to a receptacle having a heating system and a cooling system, the receptacle being configured to receive at least one rack; and

activating a heating system and a cooling system to rethermalize the apportioned food on the at least one tray on the rack that is positioned in the receptacle.

44. (AMENDED) A method of preparing and transporting food for rethermalization comprising the steps of:

apportioning food onto at least one tray;

loading at a first location at least one tray bearing the apportioned food onto a rack for receiving and supporting the at least one tray, the rack having no heating system and no cooling system;

loading the rack, containing the at least one tray, onto a transport vehicle for transportation to a remote location from the first location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, in the transport vehicle to the remote location;

after the rack has been transported to the remote location in the transport vehicle, transferring the rack from the transport vehicle to a receptacle, the receptacle being configured to receive at least one rack; and

activating a heating system and a cooling system to rethermalize the apportioned food on the at least one tray on the rack that is positioned in the receptacle; the heating system and the cooling system being demountably coupled to the receptacle.

45. (AMENDED) A method of preparing and transporting food for rethermalization comprising the steps of:

a portioning food onto at least one tray;

loading at a first location at least one tray bearing the apportioned food onto a rack for receiving and supporting the at least one tray, the rack having no heating system and no cooling system;

loading the rack, containing the at least one tray, onto a transport vehicle for transportation to a remote location from the first location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, in the transport vehicle to the remote location;

after the rack has been transported to the remote location in the transport vehicle, transferring the rack from the transport vehicle to a receptacle, the receptacle being configured to receive at least one rack;

providing the receptacle with a heating system and a cooling system to rethermalize the apportioned food on the at least one tray on the rack in the receptacle; and

activating at least one of the heating system and the cooling system to rethermalize the apportioned food on the at least one tray on the rack that is positioned in the receptacle;

the heating system and the cooling system being located in the receptacle.

46. (AMENDED) A method of preparing and transporting food for rethermalization comprising the steps of:

apportioning food onto at least one tray;

loading at a first location at least one tray bearing the apportioned food onto a rack for receiving and supporting the at least one tray, the rack having no heating system and no cooling system;

loading the rack, containing the at least one tray, onto a transport vehicle for transportation to a remote location from the first location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, in the transport vehicle to the remote location;

after the rack has been transported to the remote location in the transport vehicle, transferring the rack from the transport vehicle to a receptacle, the receptacle being configured to receive at least one rack;

providing the receptacle with a heating system and a cooling system to rethermalize the apportioned food on the at least one tray on the rack in the receptacle; and

activating at least one of the heating system and the cooling system to rethermalize the apportioned food on the at least one tray on the rack that is positioned in the receptacle;

the heating system and the cooling system being located in the receptacle.